NUMB. CCCXIII.

The SPECTATOR.

Exigite ut mores teneros ceu pollice ducat,
Ut si quis cerâ vultum facit——— Juv.

Thursday, February 28. 1712

I give the following Letter no other Recommendation, than by telling my Readers that comes from the same Hand with that of last

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send you, according to my Promise, some farther Thoughts on the Education of Youth, which I intend to discuss that famous Question, *whether the Education at a publick School, or under a private Tutor, is to be preferr'd?*

Some of the greatest Men in most Ages have been of very different Opinions in this Matter, I shall give a short Account of what I think may be urged on both sides, and afterwards leave every Person to determine for himself.

'Tis certain from *Suetonius*, that the *Romans* kept the Education of their Children a business entirely belonging to the Parents themselves; and *Plutarch*, in the Life of *Marcus Cato* tells us, that as soon as his Son was capable of Learning, *Cato* would suffer no body to Teach him but himself, though he had a Servant named *Chilo*, who was an excellent Grammarian, and who taught a great many other Youths.

On the contrary, the *Greeks* seemed more enamoured to Publick Schools and Seminaries.

A private Education promises in the first place Genteel and Good-Breeding; a publick School the only Assurance, and an early Knowledge in the Methods of the World.

Mr. *Locke* in his celebrated Treatise *of Education*, confesses that there are Inconveniences to be observed on both sides; *if*, says he, *I keep my Son at home, he is in danger of becoming my young Master; if I send him Abroad, it is scarce possible to keep him from the reigning Contagion of Rudeness and Vice. He will perhaps be more Innocent at Home, but more Ignorant of the World, and more sheepish when he comes Abroad.* However, as this learned Author asserts, That Vertue is much more difficult to be attained than a Knowledge of the World; and that Vice is a much more stubborn, as well as a more dangerous Fault than Sheepishness, he is altogether for a private Education; and the more so, because he does not see why a Youth, with right Management, might not attain the same Assurance in his Father's House, as at a publick School. To this end he advises Parents to accustom their Sons to all whatever strange Faces come to the House; to converse them with them when they Visit their Neighbours, and to engage them in Conversation with Persons of Parts and Breeding.

It may be objected to this Method, that Conversation is not the only thing necessary, but that unless it be a Conversation with such as are in the same measure their Equals in Parts and Years, there can be no room for Emulation, Contention, and several of the most lively Passions of the Mind; which, without being sometimes moved by these means, may possibly contract a Dulness and Insensibility.

'One of the greatest Writers our Nation ever produced observes, That a Boy who forms Parties, and makes himself Popular in a School or a College, would act the same Part with equal ease in a Senate or a Privy-Council; and Mr. *Osborn* speaking like a Man versed in the ways of the World, affirms, that the well laying and carrying on of a design to rob an Orchard, trains up a Youth insensibly to Caution, Secrecy and Circumspection, and fits him for Matters of greater Importance.

'In short, a private Education seems the most natural Method for the forming of a Vertuous Man; a Publick Education for making a Man of Business. The first would furnish out a good Subject for *Plato*'s Republick, the latter a Member for a Community over-run with Artifice and Corruption.

'It must however be confessed, that a Person at the head of a publick School has sometimes so many Boys under his Direction, that it is impossible he should extend a due proportion of his Care to each of them. This is, however, in reality the Fault of the Age, in which we often see twenty Parents, who tho' each expects his Son should be made a Scholar, are not contented all together to make it worth while for any Man of a liberal Education to take upon him the care of their Instruction.

'In our great Schools indeed this Fault has been of late Years rectified, so that we have at present not only Ingenious Men for the chief Masters, but such as have proper Ushers and Assistants under them. I must nevertheless own, that for want of the same Encouragement in the Country, we have many a promising Genius spoiled and abused in those little Seminaries.

'I am the more inclined to this Opinion, having my self experienced the Usage of two Rural Masters, each of them very unfit for the Trust they took upon them to discharge. The first imposed much more upon me than my Parts, tho' none of the weakest, could endure; and used me barbarously for not performing Impossibilities. The latter was of quite another Temper; and a Boy, who would run upon his Errands, wash his Coffee-pot, or ring the Bell, might have as little Conversation with any of the Classicks as he thought fit. I have known a Lad at this Place excused his Exercise for assisting the Cookmaid; and remember a Neighbouring Gentleman's Son was among us Five Years, most of which time he employ'd in airing and watering our Master's grey Pad. I scorned to Compound for my Faults, by

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doing any of these Elegant Offices, and was accordingly the best Scholar, and the worst used of any Boy in the School.

'I shall conclude this Discourse with an Advantage mentioned by *Quintilian*, as accompanying a Publick way of Education, which I have not yet taken notice of; namely, That we very often contract such Friendships at School, as are of Service to us all the following Parts of our Lives.

'I shall give you, under this Head, a Story very well known to several Persons, and which you may depend upon as a real Truth.

'Every one, who is acquainted with *Westminster*-School, knows that there is a Curtain which used to be drawn a-cross the Room, to separate the upper School from the lower. A Youth happened, by some Mischance, to tear the abovementioned Curtain; The Severity of the Master was too well known for the Criminal to expect any Pardon for such a Fault; so that the Boy, who was of a meek Temper, was terrified to Death at the Thoughts of his Appearance, when his Friend, who sat next to him, bad him be of good Cheer, for that he would take the Fault on himself. He kept his word accordingly. As soon as they were grown up to be Men the Civil War broke out, in which our two Friends took the opposite Sides, one of them followed the Parliament, the other the Royal Party.

'As their Tempers were different, the Youth, who had torn the Curtain, endeavoured to raise himself on the Civil List, and the other, who had born the Blame of it, on the Military: The first succeeded so well, that he was in a short time made a Judge under the Protector. The other was engaged in the unhappy Enterprize of *Penruddock* and *Groves* in the West. I suppose, Sir, I need not acquaint you with the event of that Undertaking. Every one knows that the Royal Party was routed, and all the Heads of them, among whom was the Curtain Champion, imprisoned at *Exeter*. It happened to be his Friend's Lot at that time to go the Western Circuit: The Tryal of the Rebels, as they were then called, was very short, and nothing now remained but to pass Sentence on them; when the Judge hearing the Name of his old Friend, and observing his Face more attentively, which he had not seen for many Years, asked him, if he was not formerly a *Westminster*-Scholar? By the Answer, he was soon convinced that it was his former generous Friend; and, without saying any thing more at that time, made the best of his Way to *London*, where employing all his Power and Interest with the Protector, he saved his Friend from the Fate of his unhappy Associates.

'The Gentleman, whose Life was thus preserved by the Gratitude of his School-fellow, was afterwards the Father of a Son, whom he lived to see promoted in the Church, and who still deservedly fills one of the highest Stations in it.

The First and Second Volumes of the SPECTATOR *in 8vo are now ready to be delivered to the Subscribers, by* J. Tonson *at* Shakespear's *Head over-against* Catherine-street *in the* Strand.

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For the Benefit of Mrs. Oldfield.
By Her Majesty's Company of Comedians,

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